
OFFTRAVEL - OFF THE BEATEN TRACK EXPERIENCE

Through the Heavenly Mountains



horseback riding tour in Kyrgyzstan

13 - 26 July 2025

OFFTRAVEL

HIGHLIGHTS

- **A once-in-a-lifetime 10-day adventure in the saddle: 7 days in the Terskej Alatau mountains and 3 days around Songkol Lake**
- **Beautiful Tien-shan landscapes and wild mountain nature**
- **Camping under a starry sky and overnight stays in traditional Kyrgyz yurts**
- **Bathing in Lake Issyk-kul - the second-largest mountain lake in the world**
- **Swimming with horses, playing kok boru, and other Kyrgyz games**
- **Wonderful culture and cuisine of Central Asia**

OVERVIEW

Kyrgyzstan is a small country located among the inaccessible mountains of Central Asia where the great mountain ranges – Tien-Shan and Pamir face each other. This is why the average altitude of the country reaches 2900 m above sea level. Despite the intense Russification lasting over two centuries, the inaccessible location allowed the Kyrgyz people to maintain their independence, expressed by unique traditions and way of life. Contrary to what Ryszard Kapuściński wrote, not every Kirgiz "descends from a horse" – many of them still lead nomadic or semi-nomadic lifestyle.

For thousands of years, horses have been the main mean of transport for Asian residents. As it is said amongst the Kyrgyz people: "a horse is the wings of a man." Horse riding is the best way to reach the remote, wild and inaccessible places of the Tien-Shan, or the Heavenly Mountains. This is a huge help as without horses it is impossible to survive in the wild, solitary mountains of Asia. A horse is a true and devoted friend, inseparably connected with its carer.

During our **horseback expedition through the Heavenly Mountains**, we will experience authentic Kyrgyzstan. We will follow mountain paths on horseback led by local shepherd-guides. We will see rolling herds of galloping horses and an abundance of grazing sheep, goats and yaks. We will enter a traditional Kyrgyz yurt, where we will be warmly hosted. We will taste typical Kyrgyz dishes such as *shorpo*, *kurduk* and *beshparmak*. We will taste *kumys* and delicious Kyrgyz cognac. Finally, we will melt into the scenery of surrounding landscapes, high mountains, emerald lakes and vast pastures. The return to civilization will not be an easy one.

ITINERARY

Day 1: Meeting in Bishkek and transfer to the starting place of the horse riding tour

We meet in the early morning in front of the hotel or at the airport in Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyzstan. We have our breakfast, complete the necessary formalities and set off by bus towards the high mountains of Tien-Shan. On the way, we stop in the village of Kochkor for lunch and to buy provisions for the horse trek. In the evening we reach the village of Eki-Naryn, the starting point of our horseback journey, where local guides are expecting us already. Shortly after dinner, we will have a briefing where we discuss in detail the route and course of the trek as well as safety issues. Overnight in the yurts.

Days 2-8: Unforgettable horse ride through the Tien-Shan mountains (about 200 km)

We pack up our gear, mount our horses, and off we go! Ahead of us is a seven-day horseback rally through the Terskej Alatau mountain range, during which we will cover about 200 km. The route leads through varied mountain terrain - wide alpine meadows (the so-called Jailoo), used by the Kyrgyz as pastures in summer, as well as mountain roads and paths, narrow and exposed in places. Although for the most part, the terrain is hard and dry there may be rocky or marshy places which will require more caution.

We pass shepherds' yurts, flocks of sheep, goats, horses and yaks. We cross numerous streams, gentle hills, and almost four-thousand-meter passes, from which we enjoy magnificent high-mountain views. Halfway through the rally, we arrive at the hot springs, where we take a warming bath and enjoy an extended rest. On the seventh day, we reach the village of Bokonbayevo near Lake Issyk-Kul, where we finish the rally.

We ride proven horses of the Kyrgyz breed, which walk well in the depot and excel in mountainous terrain. Each rider is given a horse most suitable for their skills, physical conditions, and preferences. Each day we spend between five and seven hours in the saddle, stopping at pastoral yurts for an extended lunch break halfway through the route. We use local touring saddles, very comfortable and suitable for long-distance rallies. We are accompanied by proven and experienced local guides who know the terrain well. They look after the horses and take care of saddling and unsaddling. Participants' help is always welcome. We travel light, equipped with riding packs into which we pack drinks, small snacks, a raincoat, and a camera. All our equipment is transported by an off-road vehicle between overnight stays.

The trek is open to experienced riders, skilled in riding outdoors and able to ride independently and smoothly at all three gaits. We ride in a group or loose formation, using different gaits depending on the terrain. In some areas, we may need to lead the horses on foot. If conditions allow, we may split the group into two—those who want to ride faster and those preferring a slower pace. Each group is supervised by at least one guide, and all riders stay within sight of one another.

The safety of participants is further supervised by having appropriate first aid training and an expedition first aid kit. The guides are also equipped with radio communication, as well as a satellite communicator.

During the rally we sleep in comfortable 2-person tents with two entrances and two vestibules near the shepherd yurts where meals will be prepared for us. This will be a great opportunity to taste typical Kyrgyz cuisine, based mainly on meat dishes. Although the Kyrgyz are famous for eating a lot of meat, there is no problem preparing vegetarian meals. Our hygiene is provided by mountain streams, hot springs or warm water heated in a yurt on a cooker. On the last day of the rally we sleep in a guesthouse in Bokonbayev.

Day 9: Rest by the Issyk-Kul lake

Before noon, we take a bus to Issyk-kul Lake to relax after the rally on a picturesque beach. Issyk-kul is the second largest mountain lake in the world, after Titicaca. It entices with its warm waters, picturesque beaches, and astounding views of the surrounding peaks of the Heavenly Mountains. It has been dubbed the 'Pearl of Kyrgyzstan' or the 'Sea of Central Asia', and for Kyrgyz people, it is a holiday destination and a getaway.

Relaxing by the lake is the perfect opportunity to enjoy *shashlik*, juicy fruit, cool beer, and Kyrgyz cognac. Eager visitors can take a dip in the warm waters of the lake, surrounded by beautiful snow-capped mountains.

In the afternoon, we set off by bus towards Song-kol Lake, arriving in the evening at the lake located at 3016m above sea level on a vast mid-mountain plain. Overnight stay in yurts.

Days 10-12: Horseback riding tour around the Song-Kol lake (about 100 km)

We are embarking on a three-day horseback ride around Song-kol Lake. The route of the rally takes us along the flat, grassy shores of the lake, ideally suited for fast gallops. We will cover approximately 100 km in the saddle over three days. After a week spent in the mountainous terrain of the Terskej Alatau range, this stage of the expedition is the perfect opportunity to practice your galloping skills, either in pack or free formation.

We pass by shepherds' yurts and herds of grazing animals. We stop at spots with breathtaking views of the lake and surrounding mountains. In good weather, we take a refreshing swim, and those interested can try bathing the horses. In our free time at the overnight stops, those craving true competition can test their skills in *kok boru*, the national equestrian game of the Kyrgyz people, or in horseback races.

We stay overnight and dine in tourist yurts. We are accompanied by local guides. Just as we did during the rally in the Terskej Alatau range, we travel 'light' and our equipment is transported between overnight stays by an off-road vehicle.

Day 13: Back to Bishkek

Before noon, we embark on a return bus ride to Bishkek. Upon arriving in the capital of Kyrgyzstan, we check into a hotel in the city center. Afterwards, we go for a walk along Bishkek's main street Chui Avenue. Overnight at the hotel.

Day 14: Highlights of the Kyrgyz capital

We spend the whole day in Bishkek. This includes going to the famous Osh Bazaar, where we can buy interesting souvenirs from Kyrgyzstan, visiting the CUM department store, exploring Ala-Too and Victory squares, and more. In the evening we will meet for a farewell dinner. Overnight stay at the hotel.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Country: Kyrgyzstan
Date: 13 – 26 June 2025
Duration: 14 days
Number of participants: 5 - 10 people (minimum number of participants: 5 people)

Expedition Cost: 1350 EUR (payable within 3 days from an Agreement date)

Includes:

- organization of the Expedition and support of the English-speaking Leader
- hire of the personal tourist equipment (2-person tents, transportation bags, saddle bags)
- providing of team equipment (camping equipment, satellite communicator, first aid kit)
- expedition package (T-shirt, multifunctional neckwear)
- health & accidents insurance
- Touristic Guarantee Found and Touristic Assistance Found fees

Expedition Cost: 1200 USD

Includes:

- local transfers in rented cars
- rental of horses with the necessary equipment
- hire of local horseback riding guides
- rental of a car for luggage transportation during the horseback riding trips
- full board from day 1 till 14 of the Expedition (breakfast, lunch and dinner based on local gastronomy; during the horseback riding trips – meals prepared by a cook in camping conditions)
- accommodation (14 nights) in yurts (dormitory), guesthouse (double, triple and dorm rooms) and hotel (double rooms) according to the Itinerary
- entrance fees to visited places

Self-organized flight to Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

Additional information:

- The participant should be familiar with current passport, visa and sanitary regulations as well as health requirements including recommended vaccinations, available on the website of the embassy or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of his / her country of residence.
- The participant should have trail horseback riding experience (multi-hours recreational trail trips) and should have walk, trot and galop riding skills.
- The expedition is organized under the rules stated in the [Terms and conditions of participating expeditions](#).

Leader: Maciej Musil

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REQUIRED EQUIPMENT | CHECKLIST

BAG	travel bag or big backpack (60-80 liters) (as a main luggage)	<input type="checkbox"/>
	small backpack (20-30 liters) (used as a plane hand-luggage and during sightseeing)	<input type="checkbox"/>
SLEEPING	warm sleeping bag (comfortable within temperature range as low as -5°C)	<input type="checkbox"/>
	foam sleeping mat, self-inflating mat or light air mattress	<input type="checkbox"/>
	inflatable travel pillow (optional)	<input type="checkbox"/>
FOOTWEAR	light shoes	<input type="checkbox"/>
	sandals	<input type="checkbox"/>
	flip-flops (optional)	<input type="checkbox"/>
OUTERWEAR	wind protection hooded jacket (e.g. softshell)	<input type="checkbox"/>
	warm thermoactive sweatshirt	<input type="checkbox"/>
	down vest or sweater (e.g. Primaloft)	<input type="checkbox"/>
	hoodie or long sleeve shirt	<input type="checkbox"/>
	long pants	<input type="checkbox"/>
	shorts	<input type="checkbox"/>
	warm gloves and hat	<input type="checkbox"/>
	light headgear to protect against the sun	<input type="checkbox"/>
	multifunctional neckwear (e.g. Buff)	<input type="checkbox"/>
UNDERWEAR	warm long-sleeved T-shirt and leggings (e.g. from Merino wool)	<input type="checkbox"/>
	underwear	<input type="checkbox"/>
	T-shirts (1 piece per 2-3 days)	<input type="checkbox"/>
	swimsuit	<input type="checkbox"/>
HYGIENE	quick-drying towel (large)	<input type="checkbox"/>
	quick-drying towel (small)	<input type="checkbox"/>
	hygiene utensils and cosmetics (biodegradable) in small bags	<input type="checkbox"/>
	wet wipes (biodegradable)	<input type="checkbox"/>
	toilet paper	<input type="checkbox"/>
	antibacterial hand gel	<input type="checkbox"/>
	sun block (min. SPF 30)	<input type="checkbox"/>
	lipstick	<input type="checkbox"/>
ACCESSORIES	sunglasses	<input type="checkbox"/>
	touristic knife	<input type="checkbox"/>
	lighter	<input type="checkbox"/>
	pen and small notebook	<input type="checkbox"/>
	waterproof bags and strong plastic bags (2-3 pcs.)	<input type="checkbox"/>

	zip lock bags for documents and electronics	<input type="checkbox"/>
	neck pouch or hip pack (for documents and money)	<input type="checkbox"/>
KITCHEN	reusable water bottle (e.g. Nalgene) (min. 1 liter)	<input type="checkbox"/>
	cup	<input type="checkbox"/>
	bowl	<input type="checkbox"/>
	spoon or spork	<input type="checkbox"/>
ELECTRONICS	flashlight (headlamp) and a set of spare batteries	<input type="checkbox"/>
	mobile phone and charger	<input type="checkbox"/>
	power bank	<input type="checkbox"/>
DOCUMENTS and MONEY	passport	<input type="checkbox"/>
	photocopy of passport (pages with photo and data)	<input type="checkbox"/>
	payment card (optional)	<input type="checkbox"/>
	cash (undamaged notes, without inscriptions or stamps)	<input type="checkbox"/>
HORSEBACK RIDING EQUIPMENT	riding helmet	<input type="checkbox"/>
	riding boots	<input type="checkbox"/>
	riding pants	<input type="checkbox"/>
	raincoat	<input type="checkbox"/>
	gaiters or chaps	<input type="checkbox"/>
	riding gloves	<input type="checkbox"/>
	safety vest for horse riding (optional)	<input type="checkbox"/>
	saddle bags	<input type="checkbox"/>
PERSONAL FIRST AID KIT	individual medications (after consultation with a doctor): painkillers, anti-inflammatory and antipyretics, medications for poisoning and stomach problems, cream for abrasions, electrolytes, medications taken regularly	<input type="checkbox"/>
	basic dressings: disposable gloves, alcohol gauze pads, plasters, sterile compresses, elastic bandage	<input type="checkbox"/>
	thermal blanket (NRC foil)	<input type="checkbox"/>